

Mr. Chairman, I have listened to the debate over the course of the last hour with great interest. I think it is an example of how we have a tremendous capacity on the floor of this Chamber to talk past one another. It is an example here of one of many items where people get involved in a vicious cycle of subsidization that ends up savaging the markets, disadvantaging consumers, and posing great risks to the environment.

We could have had this same conversation about what happens with products in the fisheries industry. Estimates have been made that it costs about \$1.33 in total cost and government subsidies to deliver \$1 of product that is harvested from our oceans.

There is no doubt in my mind that the sugar industry around the world is subsidized in many areas and produces distorting effects. But I do not think that the answer here is for us to step back and try to somehow imagine away the distorting effects in our country.

We have heard on this floor that there is a disproportionately few number of people who benefit from this. If people want to step back and provide benefits for small family farms, I will be the first to look at ways that we can, in fact, do that in a cooperative fashion. But this program does not do that. It is not targeted. And, sadly, that is the case with many of our other agricultural subsidies that we spend billions of dollars on. Precious little gets to the small family farm, and they continue to go out of business each and every year.

I think we have had people back away from the myth that somehow this is paid for by magic, that there is no risk to the consumer or to the taxpayer. And I thank my colleague the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Miller) for talking about that; and, if time permits, I would like to discuss it further with him.

The notion somehow that prices here are too low, well, what is happening in the face of prices being too low and a worldwide glut, the evidence is that every year since 1996 production has increased in terms of the acreage in the United States, every year since 1996; and the estimation for the year 2000, with the terrible prices, the threat of world dumping, all of the things that we have heard, the estimates are that we are going to plant at least as much as we did last year.

But my particular interest has to do with the vicious cycle we are in in terms of the environment. We heard our colleague the gentleman from California (Mr. George Miller) talk about the cycle that we are in in terms of subsidization, more imports at lower prices, having to subsidize and purchase more, stockpiling sugar, at least at this point that we do not need and we have no market for.

But I am concerned with the cycle that we are involved with in terms of the Everglades this Congress is involved with, and I commend the effort to try and repair decades of damage to that fragile ecosystem. It is a situation in south Florida where people are going to end up having to desalinate water in the foreseeable future, a product that is going to cost them more than petroleum and that is going to taste about as good.

Yet, what are we doing in this Congress to deal with the serious problems that are associated with it? The sugar program is clearly harmful to the environment in south Florida. The subsidized production of sugar in Florida results in this phosphorus-laden agricultural runoff flowing into the Everglades, contributing to the destruction of the ecosystem. And we do not have enough money to fix that.

But, amazingly, the Government continues to support the sugar program in south Florida even as we are asking to put up more money to repair the destruction. And, in fact, according to the information I have received, the production in Florida for cane sugar has gone up every year since 1996 and this last year was an estimated 10,000 more acres, compounding the problem.

Mr. Chairman, I yield to my colleague, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Miller), to see if I understand correctly the dilemma that we are facing in this Congress.